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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR NEA/RA, NEA/IPA, OES/SENV AND OES/PCI
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SUBJECT: NGO LEADERS EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT SHARED MOUNTAIN
AQUIFER AND URGE USG TO REMAIN INVOLVED IN SEWAGE TREATMENT
PROJECTS IN WEST BANK

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY.

CONSULATE GENERAL JERUSALEM CLEARED THIS MESSAGE.

1. (SBU) PALESTINIAN AND ISRAEL REPRESENTATIVES OF ECOPEACE/FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MIDDLE EAST (FOEME) MET WITH NEA SENIOR S&T ADVISOR CHARLES LAWSON, CONSULATE GENERAL ECONOMIC OFFICER AND EMBASSY ESTH OFFICER AT THE CONGEN IN JERUSALEM JUNE 14 TO DESCRIBE THEIR FINDINGS ON THE DETERIORATING MOUNTAIN AQUIFER SHARED BY ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS. THE FOEME REPS NOTED THAT LARGE QUANTITIES OF UNTREATED WASTEWATER AND SOLID WASTE ARE DUMPED ON THE AQUIFER'S SENSITIVE RECHARGE AREA ON THE WEST BANK, RISKING THE FUTURE AVAILABILITY OF SCARCE WATER. THEY SAID THAT THEIR CONCERNS WERE SHARED BY ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN WATER OFFICIALS AND SCIENTISTS. THE FOEME REPRESENTATIVES ASKED THAT THE USG TREAT SANITATION ISSUES AS HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS AND THAT USAID CONTINUE ITS PREVIOUS WORK ON SEWAGE TREATMENT IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES INCLUDING THE SUSPENDED HEBRON WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT.

2. (SBU) FOEME IS BEGINNING ITS THIRD STUDY OF THE MOUNTAIN AQUIFER, FOLLOWING EARLIER REPORTS ON THE AFFECTS OF SOLID WASTE AND SEWAGE ON THE AQUIFER. THE THIRD REPORT, LIKE THE PREVIOUS STUDIES SUPPORTED BY THE GOLDMAN FUND, WILL FOCUS ON RURAL SANITATION ISSUES. THE NGO REPRESENTATIVES SAID THAT MORE THAN 60 PERCENT OF PALESTINIAN SEWAGE IN THE WEST BANK COMES FROM RURAL VILLAGES. THEY PROPOSED THAT THE USG FIND WAYS TO BENEFIT PALESTINIANS BY WORKING ON SEWAGE PROBLEMS IN LOCAL JURISDICTIONS. THEY NOTED THAT GERMANY WAS MOVING AHEAD WITH SEVERAL LARGE SEWAGE TREATMENT PROJECTS IN LARGER JURISDICTIONS AND ITALY WAS SUPPORTING THE CREATION OF LOCAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COUNCILS. THEY SAID THAT RESTRICTIONS ON THE MOVEMENT OF PALESTINIANS WERE THE SINGLE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO PROPER DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE. FOEME PLANS TO MEET WITH GOI DEFENSE MINISTER PERETZ TO DISCUSS HOW THE MOD COULD HELP ALLEVIATE SUCH PROBLEMS.

JONES